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RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK AND REFORM OF THE AGENDA OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

Report of the First Committee

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee" was included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly decision 50/421 of 12 December 1995.

2. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 19 September 1997, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 9 October 1997, the First Committee decided to hold an exchange of views on the item, which was held at the 13th and 14th meetings, on 3 and 4 November (see A/C.1/52/PV.13 and 14).

4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it a letter dated 1 October 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the communiqué of the Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, held in New York on 25 September 1997 (A/52/447-S/1997/775).

II. DRAFT DECISION A/C.1/52/L.51 and Rev.1

5. On 12 November, the Chairman of the Committee submitted a draft decision entitled "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee" (A/C.1/52/L.51), which read:

"The General Assembly, recalling its resolution 48/87 of 16 December 1993 and bearing in mind the need to enhance the efficient functioning of the First Committee, decides that:

"(a) As from the fifty-third session, the First Committee:

"(i) Will make every effort to conduct and conclude its substantive work with the most efficient use of time in not less than thirty meetings;

"(ii) Will conduct its work by combining the existing phases in the programme of work: 'Structured discussion of specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and international security agenda items' and 'Consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all agenda items', provided that sufficient time will be allowed for informal consultations and discussions on draft resolutions;

"(b) The Chairman of the First Committee will conduct consultations with regard to the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the Committee in all its aspects and report to the General Assembly at the beginning of its fifty-third session.

"The General Assembly further decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-third session the item entitled 'Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee'."

6. On 14 November, the Chairman submitted a revised draft decision (A/C.1/52/L.51/Rev.1), which contained the following change: in subparagraph (a) (i), the words "with the most efficient use of time in not less than thirty meetings" were replaced by the words "with the most efficient use of time not exceeding five weeks, if possible".

7. At the 24th meeting, on 17 November, the Chairman of the Committee made a statement in which he withdrew draft decision A/C.1/52/L.51/Rev.1 (see A/C.1/52/PV.24).